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SCSA Announces Events Observing Victims' Rights Week

*State Departments Participate in Annual Observance to Call Attention to
Crime Victim Resources*

SACRAMENTO – State and Consumer Services Agency is committed to supporting crime victims throughout the year and protecting and raising awareness about Californian's civil rights. In line with that vision, Secretary Rosario Marin announces programs and exhibits within her agency that honor Victims' Rights Week.

The California Victim Compensation Program, which has paid more than \$1.7 billion to victims of violent crime in California since 1965, will participate in a March to the Capitol on April 16. Last fiscal year, the program approved more than 44,000 applications for assistance and paid nearly \$75 million to victims for expenses such as medical, dental and mental health treatment, relocation and funeral costs.

“Governor Schwarzenegger proclaimed April 13-19 as Crime Victims’ Rights Week in California to honor our survivors and promote positive change” said Secretary Marin, Chair of the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board. “By investing in justice for victims, we move closer to achieving justice for all Californians. Crime can strike anyone and we are committed to providing services that meet the current needs of victims.”

Marin noted that the Victim Compensation Program is not taxpayer-supported as often thought, but funded through fines, fees and penalties paid by state and federal criminal offenders.

The annual observance highlights the ongoing challenges faced by crime victims to recover from their physical, emotional and financial injuries and stand up for their rights in the criminal justice system. To date, California and 32 other states have amended their constitutions to protect these rights. California has long been a leading supporter of victims’ rights: it is the first state to establish a victim compensation program; the first state to establish a hospital-based sexual assault treatment center; the first to establish a victim assistance program; and the first state to implement a domestic violence shelter.

Despite these advances, there is much more that we can do to serve victims of crime, according to Karen McGagin, Executive Officer of the VCGCB.

“As a community, we can take steps to respond to the needs of victims. First, we can acknowledge that crime affects everyone. Second, we can recognize that victims’ rights promote justice – both for victims and for the community, said McGagin. “Finally, we can serve victims more effectively by educating them about our program, helping them to understand their rights, to negotiate the criminal justice system, and to access needed services.”

In keeping with the Governor’s mission to strengthen victims’ rights, the Office of Information Security and Privacy Protection is also taking part in Victims’ Rights Week by promoting the rights of identity theft victims and educating the public about the Fair Credit Reporting Act the state passed in 2003.

The California African American Museum is now running *Common Ground*, an exhibit that features contemporary art that calls attention to victims of violent crime in Mexican American and African American communities, and the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board conducts continual community outreach events throughout the year.

Crime victims, survivors, local victim advocates and state program representatives will join in local events, candlelight vigils and the rally at the State Capitol during the week to honor victims, their families and those who serve them.

For additional information about the California Victim Compensation Program or local crime victim assistance resources, call the Victim Compensation Program toll free at **1-800-777-9229**, or visit **www.victimcompensation.ca.gov** for a listing of community events that are observing National Crime Victims’ Rights Week.